

University of Groningen

Identity patterns in diverse workgroups

Vos, Menno Wouter

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

2009

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Vos, M. W. (2009). *Identity patterns in diverse workgroups: improving social integration outcomes through relational identities*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen, Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences]. s.n.

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Chapter 3

*With a little help from my friends: enhancing prosocial behavior in diverse work groups by focusing on relational identities*²

Many tasks in life cannot be accomplished without the help or cooperation of others: our loved ones, our colleagues, or just people in the street. The famous Beatles song already suggests that we can achieve anything “with a little help from our friends”. Indeed, most people are quite willing to help others that form part of their “ingroups”, that is the groups with which they identify and that make up how they see themselves. We feel committed to members of our peer groups, our football team, or people that sympathize with the same political party. But what if we have to collaborate with others who we regard as “outgroup”? What if the cry for help comes from a member of a different social group? The present study focuses on prosocial behavior in diverse work groups. More specifically, we will examine an individuals’ willingness to help and cooperate with ingroup and outgroup members within the same overarching work group.

Diversity has increasingly been an issue for organizations, due to migration and global competition. Employees from different functional and demographic backgrounds (e.g. ethnicity, gender, age) are working more and more together in teams to gain positive benefits for the organization. On the positive side, a diverse workforce may lead to higher performance and creativity because individuals from different backgrounds bring in different perspectives on problem solving tasks (e.g., Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998). However, diversity is also associated with several drawbacks. Research has shown that heterogeneous teams are in a disadvantaged position when it comes to group cohesion (O’Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989) and member commitment (Riordan & Shore, 1997) compared to homogeneous teams. These negative outcomes of diversity are often explained from a Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner 1979) and Self Categorization Theory (SCT; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) perspective.

SIT assumes that people enter social situations with a self-concept that is basically determined by their personal identity and their social identity (see Turner, 1982). Personal identity is the individuated self – those characteristics that differentiate one individual from others within a given social context. Personal identities are contrasted with social identities, which reflect categorizations of the self into more inclusive social units that depersonalize the self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Self categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) assumes that individuals use similarities and differences as a basis for categorizing the self and others

² This chapter is based on Vos & Van der Zee (2009).

into social groups. As a result, these categorizations lead to the distinction between one's own ingroup and one or more outgroups. In line with the similarity attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971), individuals tend to like and trust ingroup members more than outgroup members because ingroup members share the same characteristics, views and beliefs, which in turn reduces uncertainty in social interactions. Consequently, individuals will identify themselves more with their own ingroup than with the outgroup, for example their own work unit or department rather than other work units or departments.

Applied to a diverse work group context, categorization processes may result in the forming of subgroups within the same collective, due to workgroup members' higher identification with fellow work group members who share the same characteristics than with those who do not (Van Knippenberg, 2004). For example, in a mixed-age team, both younger team members and older team members may stick together and separate from each other because of their common age.

One of the problems associated with higher identification with one's own subgroup can be that the subgroup reinforces behaviors that are consistent with group members' subgroup values rather than with general norms in the work group. Since what is regarded appropriate behavior will differ across subgroups, incompatibility of subgroup values may harm constructive group processes in work groups and may cause problematic relations between subgroups (e.g., Messick & Mackie, 1989; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, under conditions of strong subgroup identification, a Surinam football player in the Dutch team may be inclined to support his Surinam fellow player who was not selected for the final team by refraining from playing, rather than offering his talents for the benefit of the team. In a study among postgraduate students who worked in culturally diverse groups, Van der Zee, Atsma and Brodbeck (2004) indeed showed that subgroup identification reduced commitment to the group as a whole. Taken together, diverse groups are faced with a problem when members identify themselves more with members from their own subgroup than with members from other subgroups or the team as a whole. As individuals tend to put more effort in the groups they identify as their ingroup (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004; Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994), our expectation is that individuals display more prosocial behavior in terms of cooperation and helping tendencies towards members from one's own subgroup than towards members of other subgroups.

The question remains how diverse groups can deal with a lower willingness to cooperate with others outside their own subgroup. The dominant perspective in the social identity literature is that promotion of a collective overarching team identity enhances trust,

solidarity and well-being in diverse teams. Creating a joint identity among group members may reduce ingroup tensions and may promote the feeling that prosocial behaviors will be reciprocated (e.g. Van der Zee et al., 2004). However, a strong focus on a collective team identity may have its downsides. According to Brewer (1991), individuals enter social groups with a need to belong and a need to be distinctive. That is, they strive for a sense of belongingness to and unitedness with important social groups while at the same time searching for ways of being distinctive and unique. Whereas the need to belong may be satisfied by identification with groups that are highly inclusive, such as the work team, the need to be distinct may be primarily served by identification with less inclusive subgroups within the work team. In addition, the ingroup projection model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999) predicts that group members regard the overarching group identity to coincide with the identity of their own subgroup and as a result project the specific characteristics of their subgroup to the team as a whole. The work group is thus perceived as a representation of the specific norms and values of the own subgroup, which probably obstructs identification with and positive attitudes towards members of other subgroups.

Defining identities in terms of interpersonal relations

The assumption of the present study is that positive reactions towards members of other subgroups may be facilitated by shifting the focus from categorizing others into groups to engaging others as individuals irrespective of their memberships of certain social categories. This can be achieved when individuals frame the situation in terms of the interpersonal relations they have with others rather than in terms of the groups to which they belong (see Brickson, 2000; Brickson & Brewer, 2001).

In this regard, Brewer and Gardner (1996) extended social identity notions by proposing a theoretical framework in which the social self concept is divided into an interpersonal component (relational identity orientation) and a collective component (collective identity orientation). The *relational identity orientation* refers to an individual's conception of his/her relatedness to other individuals. Relationally oriented individuals include representations of (close) relationships with others into their mental representations of themselves (cf. Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992). Positive feelings about the self will derive from developing and maintaining close relationships with other individuals (Cross et al., 2000). A *collective identity orientation* refers to the conception of being a group member and a self description in terms of characteristics that are connected to the group. Furthermore,

collectively oriented individuals are likely to judge their worth by how their group compares to other groups. Collective identities, as opposed to relational identities, do not necessarily require interpersonal relationships among group members. Both social identity orientations are contrasted with the *personal identity orientation*. This orientation refers to an individual's conception of oneself primarily in terms of individual traits and characteristics, in which a positive view about the self is derived from a sense of uniqueness compared to others.

According to Brewer and Gardner (1996) these identity orientations may coexist in the same individual and can be activated at different times and in different contexts. For example, my personal identity orientation would likely be activated when I am writing a research proposal and want to distinguish my work from fellow social researchers in my department. I will likely adopt a relational identity orientation during a lunch break with my fellow department members, when I am primarily focused on the relationships I have with my colleagues. Finally, my collective identity orientation will probably be activated when I am attending a conference with colleagues from my department where we encounter other departments from other faculties. However, specific identity orientations may not only be triggered by a certain context, but can also reflect stable individual differences (see Vos, Van der Zee & Buunk, 2009). From this individual difference perspective, individuals have a dominant identity orientation based in their personality, which guides their behavior in specific situations. For example, personally oriented individuals in general tend to regard playing golf with friends as an opportunity to win a game, whereas relationally oriented individuals may particularly focus on the ability to get deeper involvement in the relationships with the friends they are playing with.

What do these three identity orientations imply for prosocial behavior in diverse workgroups? Individuals with a personal identity orientation generally act in terms of self-interest and seek positive personal outcomes relative to other individuals (Brickson, 2000). As a result, these individuals will not be strongly inclined to help others, even not those individuals who belong to one's own ingroup. In case of a collective identity orientation, individuals are motivated to ensure the welfare of their own group, often at the expense of other groups. They view themselves in terms of the characteristics that belong to the group, and determine their self-worth by evaluating how their group compares to other groups. Applied to a diverse workgroup context, the salience of a collective identity orientation may strengthen the barriers between the members who do not share the same characteristics, norms and values; thus facilitating or maintaining subgroup forming. Mutual cognitive understanding and concern among members of different subgroups are most likely to emerge

from a relational identity orientation (Brickson 2000; Brickson & Brewer, 2001). Such an orientation is likely to surface from dyadic relationships for example organized in small face to face groups or dense and integrated networks. The situation is framed in terms of mutual relations rather than in terms of group membership and the norms that go along with it. Studies indicate that a relational identity orientation promotes the extension of empathy and positive affect, even beyond the interactants to other targets and perceivers (Brickson, 1998; Pettigrew, 1997). Applied to a diverse work group context, this may imply that individuals with a relational identity orientation are less inclined to ‘think in categories’ and tend to perceive others who are different from themselves as individuals instead of members of an outgroup. Consequently, an individual’s concern for others may extend the borders of the own subgroup, resulting in a higher tendency to cooperate with and help fellow workgroup members who do not share the same characteristics, norms or values.

Present research

Up till now, little research has systematically studied the impact of the different identity orientations on cognition and behavior (for exceptions, see Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson, 1998; Stapel & Van der Zee, 2006). In the present series of studies, we will examine whether a relational identity orientation, either as a dominant individual difference characteristic or as a perspective triggered by the situation, facilitates prosocial responses of work group members towards fellow workgroup members who do not share the same characteristics, norms or values. We will focus on an intragroup context, i.e. a diverse group that is composed of different subgroups. In this context, outgroup members are members of a different subgroup within the same overarching group. Furthermore, the present study will address two different forms of prosocial behavior: cooperation and helping. Cooperation involves two or more people coming together as partners to work interdependently toward a common goal that will benefit all involved, whereas helping behavior is a unilateral and individual action: one person needs assistance and the other possesses the resources necessary to provide it (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin & Schroeder, 2005). Both forms of prosocial behavior seem relevant in the context of (diverse) work groups. With regard to cooperation, work group members usually have to collaborate with each other to gain beneficial results for the team and the organization. With regard to helping, behaviors such as assisting others in doing their work or volunteering to orient new members in the group not

only promote beneficial outcomes for the team but also builds and preserves harmony within the team (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998).

In Study 1, we focus on how individual differences in relational identity orientation may affect cooperation tendencies in diverse work groups. People who score high on this trait will be contrasted with people who score low on this trait. In Study 2, outcomes of priming different identity orientations on the willingness to help own subgroup and other subgroup members will be examined. Effects of relational identity orientation on helping will be contrasted with the effects of personal and collective identity orientation. Finally, in Study 3 we will examine the combined effects of both personality-based and situation-based identity orientations. More specifically, we will focus on the interaction of individual differences in relational identity orientation with personal, relational and collective identity orientation primes on cooperation tendencies towards members of the own and the other subgroup.

Study 1

In the first study we examined to what extent members of diverse workgroups are willing to cooperate with fellow team members, who either belong to their own subgroup (ingroup members) or to another subgroup (outgroup members) in the same work group. Based on the work of Brickson (2000) outlined in the introduction, we assumed that differences in conduct towards in- versus outgroup members will disappear for individuals who score high on relational identity orientation because their focus will be on interpersonal relations rather than on ingroup-outgroup distinctions. Prosocial tendencies with others will therefore extend the borders of the own ingroup to include individuals from other groups. Based on this reasoning we hypothesized that the willingness to cooperate with outgroup members will be dependent on an individual's relational identity orientation. Therefore, we expected a stronger willingness to cooperate for high relationally oriented individuals compared to low relationally oriented individuals with regard to the outgroup condition. In contrast, we did not expect any differences between low vs. high relationally oriented individuals in the ingroup condition.

Careful consideration was taken on choosing a relevant outgroup for the Dutch student participants. In several interviews with university students that we conducted before the experiment, it appeared that Dutch students perceive German students who study in the Netherlands as a salient outgroup. It was therefore decided to include German students as outgroup targets in this study.

Method

Participants

The study was performed among 69 Dutch students (25 males, 44 females) from different faculties. The mean age of the students was 20.6 years ($SD = 2.6$). All students received course credits for their participation in the study.

Materials

Trait relational identity orientation (T-IOR). All participants filled out the relational identity orientation subscale of the Identity Orientation scale (IOS; Vos, Van der Zee and Buunk, 2009). This 7 item scale, has items such as “For my identity it is important to have relationships with others” and “I like to be absorbed in relationships” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .74$). Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) not at all to (7) extreme and aggregated into one mean relational identity orientation score.

Group membership target. In addition, participants were asked to respond to a fictitious scenario in which they were working together on a project in a diverse work group with students from different nationalities (Dutch and German students). In principle, tasks were divided among individual group members, but participants were asked to imagine that they received the request from a fellow student to collaborate on the task. In one condition, the request to collaborate came from a (Dutch) ingroup member; in the other condition, the request came from a (German) outgroup member.

Willingness to cooperate with the ingroup or outgroup target was measured with the following two items: “To what extent are you willing to cooperate on your assignment?” and “To what extent do you rather prefer to work alone on your assignment (reverse-scored)?” Both of these ratings were made on 7-point scales ranging from (1) not at all to (7) extreme. The two items correlated highly ($r = .73, p < .001$) and were aggregated into one ‘willingness to cooperate’-score.

Results

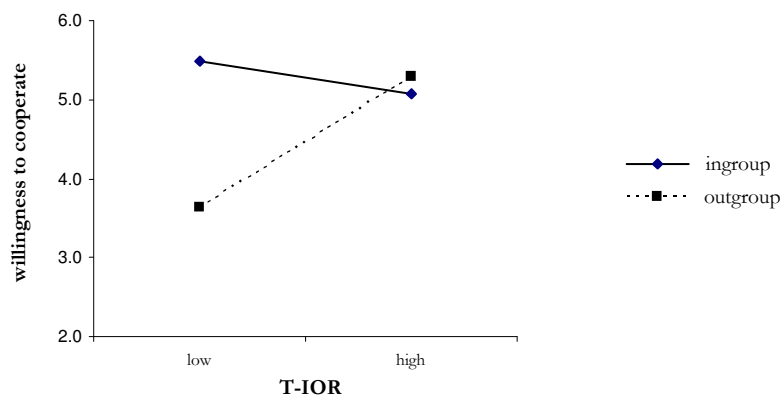
Manipulation check

A T-test revealed that participants rated the outgroup target more as a typical German student than the ingroup target on a 7-point scale, ranging from (1) not at all to (7) extreme ($M = 5.12$ vs. $M = 2.83$; $t(67) = 8.27, p < .001$), indicating that the manipulation of the group membership of the target who wants to cooperate had been successful.

Main analyses

Our hypothesis was tested using the regression approach within ANOVA. In the analysis, the manipulation of the nationality of the person asking to cooperate (target) was entered as a dichotomous independent variable, and T-IOR was entered as a continuous independent variable. The ANOVA with willingness to cooperate as the dependent variable yielded a significant main effect of target ($F(1,65) = 4.83, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$). Participants were more willing to cooperate with ingroup members ($M = 5.17, SD = 1.00$) than with outgroup members ($M = 4.68, SD = 1.14$). This effect, however, was qualified by an interaction effect of target and T-IOR ($F(1,65) = 4.00, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07$). We interpreted this interaction term by considering individuals with a low trait relational identity orientation (-1 SD) versus individuals with a high trait relational identity orientation (+1 SD) separately.

Figure 3.1 - Willingness to cooperate predicted by relational identity orientation and group membership of the target.



In line with our hypothesis, whereas T-IOR had no effect on the willingness to cooperate in the ingroup condition ($b = -.13$, $t < 1$), this trait was positively related to willingness to cooperate in the outgroup condition ($b = .34$, $t = 2.07$, $p < .05$). As Figure 1 reveals, individuals who scored high on relational identity orientation were more willing to cooperate with the German outgroup member compared to individuals who scored low on relational identity orientation, whereas no difference between low and high relational oriented individuals was found with regard to willingness to cooperate with the Dutch ingroup member.

Study 2

Study 1 showed that high trait relationally oriented individuals are more willing to cooperate with members from another subgroup in the same work group compared low trait relationally individuals. In the second study we will attempt to extend these results by shifting the focus from cooperation to helping behavior. In contrast with cooperation, which involves two or more people coming together as partners to work interdependently toward a goal that will benefit all involved (Penner et al., 2005), helping behavior is a unilateral and individual action: one person needs assistance and the other possesses the resources necessary to provide it. This may strengthen the dilemma for prosocial responses towards others, as personal benefits may to a lesser extent be realized by helping others compared to by cooperating with others.

Furthermore, we were interested in examining whether identity orientations triggered by the situation rather than individual differences in identity orientation will lead to a comparable pattern of effects as in Study 1. In line with earlier studies which induced identity orientations (see Brickson, 1998; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Stapel & Van der Zee, 2006), we contrasted effects of the relational identity orientation with effects of both the personal and collective identity orientation. Based on the assumptions we made in the introduction, we hypothesized that the willingness to help an outgroup member will be higher when a relational identity orientation is activated compared to when a personal or collective identity orientation is activated.

Again, careful consideration was taken on choosing a relevant outgroup for the participants. As the student community in which this experiment was conducted has a strong

sorority tradition, sorority members were selected as a relevant and salient outgroup for the participants in this study.

Method

Participants and design

169 female undergraduate psychology students who were not members of a sorority were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 3 (identity orientation: personal vs. relational vs. collective) x 2 (target asking for help: ingroup member vs. outgroup member) design. Mean age was 19.8 years ($SD = 2.7$). All students received course credits for their participation in the study.

Materials

Situationally induced Identity Orientation (S-IO). Identity orientation was activated by asking subjects to write a paragraph on a particular topic (cf. Stapel & Van der Zee, 2006). In the personal identity orientation condition (S-IOP), participants were asked to write a story about themselves as unique individuals. Furthermore, they were instructed that every sentence they wrote should include one of the following words: 'I', 'me', 'myself', and 'mine'. In the relational identity orientation condition (S-IOR), participants were asked to write a story about the personal relationships they have with others. In addition, they were instructed to use the words: 'I', 'others', 'relationships', and 'together'. Finally, in the collective identity orientation condition (S-IOC), participants were asked to write a story about the groups of which they are part of. In this condition, participants were instructed to use the words: 'we', 'our', 'ourselves', 'group'.

Group membership target. After subjects were primed with the different identity orientations participants were asked to respond to a fictitious scenario in which they were working on a project in a diverse work group with students from different backgrounds: both non-members and members of a local student sorority were part of this work group. Subjects had to imagine themselves faced with a dilemma situation in which they had planned to go out with some friends when they are phoned by one of their fellow group members who asks for a favor. In one condition, the request for help came from a (non-sorority) ingroup member; in the other condition, the request came from a (sorority) outgroup member. Pictures of the

other group members with name tags underneath were depicted to make the story more realistic.³

Willingness to help. Willingness to help the ingroup or outgroup target asking for help was measured with the following two items: To what extent are you willing to let her redo her presentation at your home? To what extent are you willing to help her prepare her new presentation? Both of these ratings were made on 7-point scales ranging from (1) not at all to (7) extreme. The two items correlated moderately ($r = .39$, $p < .001$) and were aggregated into one 'willingness to help'-score.

Results and discussion

Manipulation check

In line with the findings from the pilot study, a T-test revealed that participants rated the outgroup target more as a typical sorority member than the ingroup target ($M = 4.94$ vs. $M = 2.44$; $t(167) = 15.74$, $p < .001$) on a 7-point scale, ranging from (1) not at all to (7) extreme, indicating that the manipulation of the group membership of the target in need had been successful.

Main analyses

We conducted a 3 (S-IO: personal vs. relational vs. collective) \times 2 (target: ingroupmember vs. outgroupmember) ANOVA with willingness to help as the dependent variable. We found a significant main effect of target ($F(1,163) = 7.38$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$). Individuals were more willing to help ingroup members ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.07$) than outgroup members ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .98$). This effect, however, was qualified by an interaction effect of S-IO and target ($F(2,163) = 4.08$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$). Table 3.1 displays the interaction means for willingness to help.

³ A pilot study ($N = 9$), conducted before the experiment, showed that, based on the pictures of their faces, the outgroup member asking for help was rated as a more typical sorority member than the ingroup member ($M = 5.33$ vs. $M = 3.00$; $t(8) = 3.12$, $p < .01$).

Table 3.1 – Interaction means and standard deviations of willingness to help.

| | <i>Identity Orientation</i> | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | <i>Personal</i> | <i>Relational</i> | <i>Collective</i> |
| Ingroup | 4.84 _a (.90) | 4.71 _a (1.11) | 5.33 _b (.96) |
| Outgroup | 4.36 _a (.86) | 4.86 _b (.69) | 4.40 _a (1.22) |

Note: means in the same row which do not share the same subscript differ significantly ($p < .05$).

In line with our expectations, individuals in the outgroup condition who were primed with a relational identity orientation were more willing to help the target compared to individuals primed with a personal or a collective identity orientation. Interestingly, individuals in the ingroup condition who were primed with a collective identity orientation were more willing to help the target compared to individuals who are primed with a personal or a relational identity orientation. According to SIT (Tajfel & Turner 1979), individuals with a collective identity orientation are likely to judge their worth by how their group compares to other groups and thus are more likely to stick out for their fellow ingroup members to maintain a positive image of the group. Therefore, this may explain why individuals primed with a collective identity orientation were more inclined to help ingroup members than individuals primed with a personal or relational identity orientation.

In the introduction we made the implicit assumption that a higher prosocial tendency towards outgroup members is the result of a lower tendency to think in categories. Individuals with a relational identity orientation were assumed to categorize and judge others based on their group membership less than individuals with a collective identity orientation, and therefore to have stronger prosocial tendencies towards outgroup members. Some support for this reasoning was found in the data. Individuals primed with a collective identity orientation were more likely to regard the outgroup member asking for help as a typical sorority member ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.07$), compared to individuals who were primed with a relational or a personal orientation ($M = 4.65$, $SD = .95$ vs. $M = 4.80$, $SD = .87$; $F(2,79) = 4.98$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .11$). Furthermore, the extent to which participants categorized outgroup members as prototypical exemplars of their group correlated negatively with the willingness to help the target in need, although this relationship was not very strong ($r = -.18$, $p < .05$, one sided). These results provide some support that the categorization of others might

partially explain the process underlying the link between identity orientation and prosocial tendencies.

Study 3

Study 1 and 2 showed that both individual differences in relational identity orientation and identity orientation primes have impact on the willingness to behave cooperative towards fellow work group members from the own and the other subgroup. In Study 3 we attempted to integrate both personality and situation based identity orientation approaches in predicting cooperation tendencies. We aimed to test a person-by-situation model of identity orientation in which we examined interaction patterns between trait relational identity orientation and identity orientation primes.

Behavior is not purely directed by situational factors, neither is behavior purely a product of inner forces and traits, independent of social context. How individuals behave is a reflection of an enduring pattern of reciprocal interactions between the individual and his or her interpersonal world that dynamically influence each other (Baumeister, 1999; Lewin, 1935). Although many studies aiming to predict cooperative behavior focused on the sole effects of personality (e.g. Kurzban & Houser, 2001; Koole et al., 2001) or situational influences (e.g. Aquino & Reed, 1998; Polzer, Stewart & Simmons, 1999), recent studies point at the importance of considering the interplay between disposition and situation on prosocial behavior (Van Lange 2000; Van Lange, Agnew, Harinck & Steemers, 1997). The underlying idea is that personality traits may make an individual more sensitive to certain cues from the environment (e.g. Van der Zee & Perugini, 2006; Van Heck, 1997; Bargh, 1986). More specifically, individuals with specific personalities tend to frame situations in terms of their characteristic motives which will make them more sensitive to cues that are consistent with those frames. This sensitivity to cues in the context will make certain behavioral alternatives become more salient whereas others become less salient. More specifically applied to the interplay between trait relational identity orientation and identity orientation primes, high trait relationally oriented individuals will more likely understand the need for a relational identity orientation perspective compared to low trait relationally individuals when the situation prescribes it, as the qualities of this particular situation fit with his/her personality. For example, a high trait relationally oriented salesman who has to compete with other colleague salesmen to reach certain targets will find it easier to perceive a lunch break as

an opportunity to get to know his colleagues better and frame this situation in terms of interpersonal relationships, whereas a low trait relationally oriented salesman may still perceive his colleagues as competitors as his personality does not fit the particular situation. Based on the reasoning that high trait relationally oriented individuals are more sensitive to react to relational identity orientation cues from the environment, we expected that a fit between their trait relational identity orientation and the situation that triggers a relation orientation will lead to a higher willingness to cooperate. We hypothesized that high trait relationally oriented individuals have a higher tendency to cooperate with outgroup members compared to low trait relationally oriented individuals when they are primed with a relational identity orientation. In contrast, we do not expect this difference between low vs. high trait relationally oriented individuals in case of a personal or collective identity orientation prime.

Method

Participants

180 undergraduate psychology students from the University of Groningen participated in this experiment during a mass testing session. The sample consisted of 51 men (28.3 %) and 125 women (69.4 %), none of them were members of a fraternity or sorority. Mean age was 19.8 years ($SD = 2.4$). All students received course credits for their participation in the study.

Materials

Trait relational identity orientation (T-IOR). One day prior to the experiment, each participant's relational identity orientation was assessed by the relational identity orientation subscale of the Identity Orientation Scale (IOS; Vos, Van der Zee & Buunk, 2009), as described in Study 1.

Situational identity orientation (S-IO). Personal, relational and collective identity orientation was activated by using the same priming task as in Study 2.

Group membership target. After subjects were primed with the different identity orientations, they were asked to read a scenario in which they had to imagine being part of a diverse workgroup which consisted of both non-members and members of the largest student sorority of the university. As in Study 2, pictures of the work group members with name tags underneath were depicted to make the story more realistic. Subjects had to imagine

themselves faced with a dilemma situation in which they have the opportunity to cooperate with one of the workgroup members on an individual assignment. Group membership of the person who wants to cooperate was manipulated: either an ingroup non-sorority work group member or outgroup sorority workgroup members asked the subjects to cooperate on the assignment.

Willingness to cooperate with the ingroup or outgroup target was measured with the following two items: “To what extent are you willing to cooperate on your assignment?” and “To what extent do you rather prefer to work alone on your assignment (reverse-scored)?” Both of these ratings were made on 7-point scales ranging from (1) not at all to (7) extreme. The two items correlated moderately high ($r = .61, p < .001$) and were aggregated into one ‘willingness to cooperate’-score.

Results and discussion

Manipulation check

A T-test revealed that participants rated the outgroup target more as a typical sorority member than the ingroup target ($M = 4.10$ vs. $M = 2.69$; $t(173) = 6.76, p < .001$) on a 7-point scale ranging from (1) not at all to (7) extreme, indicating that the manipulation of the group membership of the target who wants to cooperate had been successful.

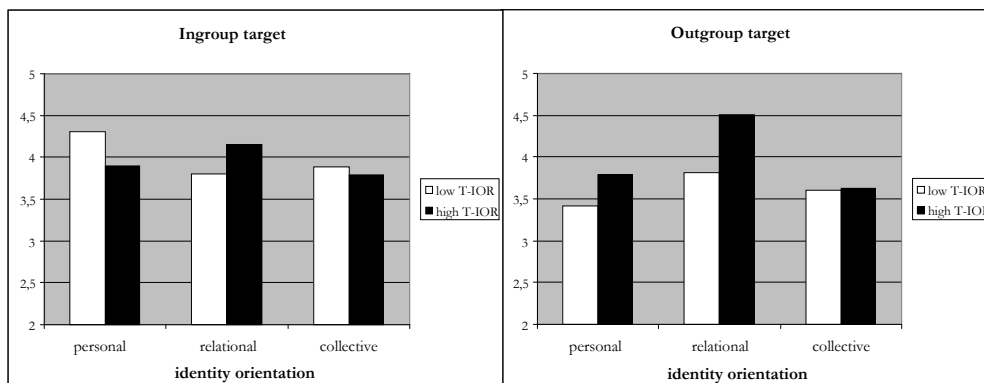
Main analyses

We used the stepwise regression approach within ANOVA, in which the manipulation of group membership of the person asking to cooperate (target) and S-IO were entered as dichotomous independent variables, and T-IOR was entered as a continuous independent variable. The ANOVA with willingness to cooperate as the dependent variable yielded no significant main effects of our independent variables (all F s < 1). However, we found a significant two way interaction effect of T-IOR and target ($F(1,158) = 4.09, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$). We interpreted this interaction term by considering individuals with a low trait relational identity orientation (-1 SD) versus individuals with a high trait relational identity orientation ($+1$ SD) separately. In line with the findings of Study 1, T-IOR had no effect on the willingness to cooperate in the ingroup condition ($b = -.03, t < 1$), whereas T-IOR was positively related to willingness to cooperate in the outgroup condition ($b = .29, t = 2.86, p < .01$). Furthermore, we found a significant two way interaction effect of target and S-IO (F

(1,158) = 3.93, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$). In line with the findings in Study 2, we again found support that individuals who were primed with a relational identity orientation were more willing to cooperate with the outgroup member ($M = 4.09$; $SD = 1.27$) compared to individuals who are primed with a personal ($M = 3.58$; $SD = 1.24$) or a collective identity orientation ($M = 3.63$; $SD = 1.40$).

The main effects indicated an additive effect of trait relational identity orientation and situationally induced identity orientation: the highest level of cooperation in the outgroup condition was reported when high trait relationally oriented individuals were primed with a relational identity orientation. Our sensitivity hypothesis assumed an enhanced effect of the relational identity orientation prime for high trait relationally oriented individuals, which implies an interaction effect between trait relational identity orientation and situational induced identity orientations. Unexpectedly, the two way interaction effect of T-IOR and S-IO as well as the three way interaction effect of target, T-IOR and S-IO appeared not to be significant (F 's < 1)⁴. However, it must be noted that when we considered the main effects for trait relational identity orientation across the identity orientation conditions in both the ingroup and outgroup condition (see Figure 3.2), we did find that among participants primed with a relational identity orientation in the outgroup condition, willingness to cooperate with the target was stronger for participants high in trait relational identity orientation compared to participants low in trait relational identity orientation ($M = 4.51$ vs. $M = 3.82$; $F(1,161) = 4.65$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .09$). No significant differences between low vs. high trait relationally oriented individuals were found in the personal and collective identity orientation conditions (F 's < 1.5). Although we have to be careful in drawing conclusions on the basis of the non significant interaction effects, this outcome provides some preliminary support for our sensitivity hypothesis.

Figure 3.2 - Willingness to cooperate as a function of TRO and SIO for ingroup and outgroup target.



Interestingly, these results seem to contrast other studies regarding effects of self activation on cooperation (e.g. Verplanken & Holland, 2002; Utz, 2004). These studies reported that the activation of the self by means of “I” primes evoked central values which guide people’s behavior. Utz (2004) showed that for individuals with altruistic values (i.e. prosocial orientation; Messick & McClintock, 1968; Van Lange, De Bruin, Otten & Joireman, 1997) cooperation was higher compared to individuals with competitive values (i.e. proself orientation) when the self was activated with I primes. Our findings are not in accordance with such an approach: high trait relationally oriented individuals did not have a higher tendency to cooperate when the personal identity orientation was activated compared to low trait relationally oriented individuals. They only did so when a relational identity orientation was activated.

Taken together, Study 3 again showed that both a relational identity orientation prime and a high trait relational identity orientation strengthened the willingness to cooperate with members from other subgroups. Furthermore, Study 3 showed that a combination of a high trait relational identity orientation with a relational identity orientation prime resulted in the highest level of cooperation. In addition, we found some indications that our sensitivity hypothesis may hold, as the willingness to cooperate with outgroup members was significantly higher for high trait relationally oriented individuals primed with a relational identity orientation, compared to low trait relationally oriented individuals primed with a relational identity orientation.

General Discussion

Members from diverse workgroups face the challenge to work effectively together. The benefits associated with diversity of bringing in different perspectives on a problem solving task may be overshadowed by lack of cohesion and by subgroup forming, which can result in lowered team identification and team members refraining from working together cooperatively (see also Van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Riordan & Shore, 1997; O’Reilly et al., 1989). The studies presented in this paper provided a theoretical basis of how to overcome these barriers of diversity.

The results from the current studies support our claim that an individual’s focus on relationships - i.e. a relational identity orientation - rather than a focus on larger, more impersonal collectives or social categories - i.e. a collective identity orientation (Brewer &

Gardner, 1996) - promotes prosocial behavior towards workgroup members from a different social group. Furthermore, by taking into account both individual differences in identity orientation and identity orientations triggered by the situation, and by unravelling the interplay between these two constructs, we gained more insight in how cooperation and helping tendencies in diverse workgroups are determined. More specifically, the first study showed that high trait relationally oriented individuals are more willing to cooperate with an outgroup member compared to low trait relationally oriented individuals. The second study showed that the induction of a relational identity orientation leads to a higher willingness to help outgroup members compared to the induction of a personal identity orientation or collective identity orientation. In other words, when people conceive themselves primarily in terms of their relationships with others, they are more willing to help fellow workgroup members from different social groups than when they perceive themselves as unique individuals or as group members. The third study replicated the findings of both studies and additionally showed that the strongest tendency to cooperate with outgroup members occurs when high trait relational oriented individuals are primed with a relational identity orientation. In other words, if the situation prescribes a relational identity orientation perspective, it is particularly for those individuals high in trait relational identity orientation who will understand this need and as a result will be more inclined to cooperate with team members from a different social group. To our knowledge, these series of studies is the first to consistently show that a relational identity orientation facilitates positive behavior intentions towards members from other social (sub)groups.

As was already outlined in the introduction, one explanation why individuals with a relational identity orientation have a stronger tendency to help outgroup members may be the fact that they categorize and judge others to a lesser extent based on their group membership. When thinking in categories, people have the tendency to judge others in terms of the content, i.e. the stereotypical characteristics, of these categorizations (Fiske, 1998). Among non-sorority members, stereotypes of sorority members are generally negative (for example, arrogant, superficial and spoiled), leading to negative evaluations of group members from this category. This negative evaluation of outgroup members may discourage individuals to help or cooperate with them. Study 2 provided first support for this reasoning. Individuals primed with a collective identity orientation rated the outgroup target as a more typical sorority member compared to individuals primed with a relational identity orientation. Apparently, they were more inclined to perceive this target in terms of her category membership. Furthermore, the extent to which individuals were categorizing the outgroup target as a

typical sorority member was negatively related to the willingness to help them. Taken together, these findings pointed out that categorization of others may be regarded as an important explanatory process for the effect of identity orientation on prosocial behavior. It must be noted that other constructs may explain this underlying mechanism as well. For example, Cross (2000) showed that a relational identity orientation was positively related to empathetic concern for others. Moreover, feelings of empathy often trigger a goal of improving the welfare of others in need (Batson, 1991). In other words, relationally oriented individuals may be more likely to experience higher feelings of empathy when they are confronted by someone in need, which in turn makes them more willing to help them. Future research may shed more light on the role of categorization and empathy as underlying processes that may be responsible for the effects of identity orientation on prosocial tendencies.

The studies presented in this paper have a number of limitations. An important limitation is that the present research employed a scenario methodology, that restricted us to measure the participant's intention to cooperate or help, and did not allow us to explore the participant's actual behavior. Although the scenario sketches reflected situations that are connected to real life experiences of the participants – which enhances the validity of the study (see Lind & Tyler, 1988) - the context in which the subjects participated still remained a hypothetical situation. Discrepancies may therefore exist between the reactions to our scenario studies and behavior in diverse workgroups with real interactants. Therefore, future studies should concentrate on the generalizability of our findings in actual interaction settings and use real behavior indicators instead of intentions.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study may have important implications for broader theoretical and practical notions on how to improve intergroup contact and relations. Several techniques for reducing intergroup tensions have been developed and formulated in the social psychological literature through the years, i.e. intergroup contact (cf. contact hypothesis; Allport, 1954), decategorization (Brewer & Miller, 1984) and recategorization (Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell & Pomare, 1990). In line with Brickson and Brewer (2001), we argue that the success of these interventions in promoting positive intergroup relations may depend on whether a relational identity orientation is activated as an integral part of intervention strategy implementation.

The *contact hypothesis* (e.g. Allport, 1954) proposes that negative intergroup attitudes can be reduced through contact between individuals from different groups. One of the main preconditions to make such interventions successful is acquaintance potential, which refers to

opportunity provided by a situation for individuals to get to know and understand each other (Cook, 1962). Acquaintance potential, together with one's willingness to accept the other as a social equal, in turn facilitates intimacy between group members. These various associated terms are all arguably subsumed under the concept of a relational identity orientation (Brickson & Brewer, 2001). Thus, a relational identity orientation may promote a facilitating environment in which positive intergroup contact will be reinforced. The current studies support this reasoning by showing that a relational identity orientation facilitates more positive behavior towards the outgroup.

The *decategorization* approach recommends replacing social identities with personal identities, based on the assumption that personal and collective identities are functionally opposed so that the personal identity orientation inhibits group-level processes such as ingroup bias or outgroup derogation (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Brickson & Brewer, 2001). Although these group level processes are less salient when personal identity orientations are activated, the present data suggest that this does not necessarily imply that positive attitudes and behavior towards outgroup members are more likely to occur. As already outlined in the introduction, individuals with a personal identity orientation have a tendency to differentiate themselves from others and will likely be less concerned with others in general (see also Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson, 2000). The current studies assent this notion: the induction of a personal identity orientation did not lead to more prosocial behavior towards outgroup members compared to the induction of a collective identity orientation.

Finally, *recategorization* invokes a superordinate group identity on the assumption that subgroup distinctions will be replaced by a common ingroup collective identity (Gaertner et al., 1990). Recategorization interventions often involve introducing superordinate goals that promote cooperative interdependence among group members. However, Mummendey and Wenzel (1999) argue that making a common ingroup identity salient does not necessarily solve the problem of negative intergroup relations. They argue that when a superordinate category is made salient, members from both ingroups may project their ingroup characteristics on the more inclusive category. Resultingly, they may tend to regard the ingroup as more prototypical for the inclusive category than the outgroup, which in turn may still obstruct cross-subgroup cooperation. Under such circumstances, shifting the focus from a collective identity to the promotion of a relational identity orientation may seem a feasible alternative strategy to preserve prosocial responses towards others. Relationally oriented individuals do not necessarily deny group memberships, but they seem to be more focused on framing the social situation in terms of connectedness with other individuals irrespective

of their group membership. Resultingly, others are approached as individuals rather than as members of a social category and potential ingroup projection processes are less likely to occur.

In addition to these theoretical implications, the results of this study may have important implications for broader practical notions on how to improve contact between subgroups and relations in a diverse work context. Many interventions in an organizational context emphasize on promoting collective identities in order to achieve a feeling of oneness among employees. For example, team building sessions are implemented to procure a strong sense of unity towards the team, department or organization as a whole. Although creating this feeling of oneness has appeared to be successful in enhancing (team) performance (Gundlach, Zivnuska & Stoner, 2006) and organizational commitment (Ouwerkerk, Ellemers, de Gilder, 1999), the current study suggests that, in the context of diverse work groups, promoting a collective identity may not always lead to beneficial outcomes. To the extent that our findings can be replicated in real work contexts, organizations that rely on diverse groups may promote a relational identity orientation rather than a collective identity orientation. This can be achieved by emphasizing on dyadic task structures, in which employees have different and interdependent roles, and rewarding dyadic performance, such as the mentoring of others (see also Brickson, 2000). Moreover, it is stimulated by activities aimed at the welfare of others (e.g. providing emotional or instrumental support, for example as a volunteer caregiver). Under such circumstances, the situation is framed in terms of mutual relations rather than in terms of group membership and when interacting through a relational identity orientation, individuals become more accountable for each other, which minimizes depersonalization of others. It must be noted that relational identity orientation cues are being picked up more easily by individuals who already have the tendency to cooperate (i.e. the high trait relationally oriented individuals). For low trait relationally oriented individuals subtle interventions such as priming a relational identity orientation appeared to be too weak to overrule behavior tendencies ensued from their personality. For these individuals stronger, more structural interventions described earlier in this paragraph may prove to be more effective.

To conclude, the present research constitutes the first attempt to link identity orientation with prosocial behavior in diverse workgroups. We showed that individual differences in relational identity orientation as well as relational identity orientation triggered by the situation improves prosocial tendencies towards group members that do not share the same background; especially when trait relational identity orientation is in concordance with

situationally induced relational identity orientation. These findings suggest that a focus on interpersonal bonds will be the key to break down barriers between subgroups within diverse work teams.